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C O N F I D E N T I A L MADRID 000643

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/17/2015

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [LE](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: SPAIN OPPOSES LISTING OF HIZBALLAH

REF: A. A) STATE 26062

[1](#)B. B) MADRID 490

Classified By: Political Officer Ricardo Zuniga; reason 1.4 (B).

[1](#)1. (C) Charge relayed ref A points to National Security Advisor Carles Casajuana on 2/14, emphasizing the importance the USG placed on pressuring Hizballah to end its terrorist activities. Poloff followed up later in the day with MFA Sub Director General for the Near East (DAS equivalent) Alberto Moreno to urge Spanish support for the designation of Hizballah as a terrorist organization. Moreno said that Spain opposes the designation of Hizballah because listing would imply a complete break in EU contacts with one of Lebanon's most important political organizations.

[1](#)2. (C) Moreno reiterated points raised in an earlier discussion of the Israeli demarche regarding Hizballah (ref B). He said that, on balance, designation of Hizballah would do "more harm than good" since it would eliminate any possibility of the EU influencing the organization in a more positive direction, or at least tracking its activities. Moreno agreed that Hizballah could not easily be divided into distinct political and military wings, though he noted that such an "artificial" division would be useful from a diplomatic standpoint since it would allow the EU to both condemn Hizballah terrorism and maintain open channels to what is an increasingly influential political and social organization. Moreno said he expected Hizballah to expand its influence during the spring parliamentary elections, making designation an even less appealing proposition in Spain's view.

[1](#)3. (C) In ref B discussion, Moreno said the GOS would require clear evidence of recent Hizballah involvement in terrorism before it would consider changing its position. He said the Israeli demarche had lacked such specifics and that he hoped the USG would be able to provide precise details to support the argument that the benefits of listing Hizballah outweighed the negatives.

//COMMENT//

[1](#)4. (C) It will not be easy to obtain Spanish support for Hizballah's designation, particularly in light of Spain's emphasis on "dialogue" with all parties in the Middle East and their sense that they can parlay such contacts into positive influence. However, the intelligence information discussed in ref A could significantly weaken GOS opposition to Hizballah's designation, especially if there is evidence that Hizballah is recruiting terrorists in Europe or otherwise using EU countries as a logistical base for terrorist activities. We have several opportunities for engaging the GOS on this issue, including during the visit of DHS Director for International Affairs Cris Arcos to represent the USG in the commemoration of the March 11 Madrid train bombings and/or during the possible visits to Washington by the Spanish Minister of Interior and the Minister of Justice for discussions on bilateral counter-terrorism cooperation. The desire of Spanish security officials to deepen counter-terrorism cooperation with the USG, for example by supporting the designation of Hizballah, could outweigh the MFA's reluctance to cut off contact with Hizballah.

MANZANARES